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SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEWS ON THE FEBRUARY 23-24 EU GAERC MEETING

Classified By: POL-MIL/EXTERNAL CHIEF BILL MOELLER. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. While the Afghanistan discussion at the February 23-24 GAERC is supposed to be limited to just 30 minutes, Germany says EU foreign ministers will have a greater opportunity to address this issue at the March GAERC meeting and at a dinner on the margins of the March 19 EU Summit. Meanwhile, Germany believes there is a growing realization among EU member states that the EU has to step up its game in Afghanistan, especially in regard to EUPOL. The discussion of the Middle East at this month's GAERC is also expected to be limited, although Germany will be prepared to reveal its planned pledge for the March 2 Cairo conference. On Serbia, Germany is concerned about the cold-shoulder treatment that the new EU Special Rep in Belgrade received from FM Jeremic this week. On Bosnia, Germany is coming back around to the view that it is not yet time to close the Office of the High Representative (OHR), given the remaining work to be done in fulfilling the 5 plus 2 agenda. Germany continues to advocate slow-rolling Montenegro's EU application until after EU foreign ministers have had a political discussion on EU enlargement, perhaps at the March Gymnich meeting. Germany has warned Belarus that recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia would have "consequences" for its relationship with the EU. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Post met with MFA Deputy European Correspondent Thomas Schieb February 20 to discuss the February 23-24 EU GAERC meeting.

AFGHANISTAN

13. (C) Schieb noted that newly appointed MFA Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Bernd Muetzelburg had held an internal meeting at the ministry earlier in the day to which all of the offices and sections involved with Afghanistan were invited. While Muetzelburg may not have the authority to speak for the whole German government, Schieb thought his appointment will significantly improve unity of effort regarding Afghanistan within the MFA. Schieb said that Muetzelburg, at this point, was still in a "listening mode," preparing for his trip next week to the United States, where he will meet Special Representative Holbrooke, among others.

14. (C) As far as the GAERC was concerned, Schieb thought the discussion of Afghanistan would be rather limited, no more than 30 minutes or so. He also did not foresee any Council conclusions on Afghanistan. He said that a more in-depth discussion was expected at March 16-17 GAERC, and that Afghanistan was scheduled to be the main topic at the foreign ministers dinner on the margins of the March 19 EU Summit.

15. (C) Schieb volunteered that there was a growing awareness among EU member states that the EU had to step up its game in Afghanistan, especially in regard to EU Police mission (EUPOL). He said that many police officers assigned to EUPOL had been disappointed that the bulk of their time was spent doing bureaucratic tasks. They thought that EUPOL needed to become "more operational" by shifting its focus to the training and mentoring of Afghan police, and by working more

at district level, rather than just in Kabul and selected provincial capitals. Schieb noted that the EU also had to make it easier to recruit police officers for service in Afghanistan by increasing the package of incentives and extra pay. Otherwise, the EU would continue to make no progress in reaching its goal of doubling EUPOL to 400 total police officers.

MIDDLE EAST

¶16. (C) Schieb said the discussion on the Middle East would be limited and that no Council conclusions were expected. He noted, however, that the EU Commission has calculated Gaza's total need for assistance, and would probably indicate at the GAERC what it is planning to contribute at the March 2 Cairo humanitarian assistance conference. Schieb said that Germany would probably also be prepared to reveal what it plans to contribute, but would only do so if asked. He stressed that the GAERC meeting is not supposed to be a "pledging exercise" in advance of the March 2 conference.

SUDAN

¶17. (C) Schieb said discussion of Sudan would depend on whether the arrest warrant for Bashir is issued or not. If it is, the EU foreign ministers are expected to issue conclusions supporting it. If no warrant is issued, the matter will be removed from the GAERC agenda.

WESTERN BALKANS

¶18. (C) Schieb thought that Kosovo would be discussed "just

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briefly" with no Council conclusions. He noted that the "hope" was that the EULEX mission would reach full operational capacity (FOC) sometime in March.

¶19. (C) Regarding new EU Special Rep in Belgrade Peter Sorensen, Schieb noted that Serbian FM Jeremic had given Sorensen the cold shoulder during a February 19 introductory meeting with UN SRSG Zannier. Schieb found Jeremic's behavior toward Sorensen odd since the EU had established the EU office in Belgrade at the express desire of the Serbian government. It would not be worth maintaining the office in the long run if this proved to be Serbia's attitude toward it.

¶10. (C) On the question of successors to Lajcak as High Representative in Bosnia, Schieb said Germany agreed that UK candidate Sir Emyr Jones Parry was best suited for the job. Schieb noted that EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Solana would make his recommendation on a successor at the GAERC.

¶11. (C) On Bosnia, Schieb indicated that Germany was coming back around to the view that it was not yet time to close the Office of the High Representative (OHR), given the remaining work to be done in fulfilling the 5 plus 2 objectives and conditions. While continuing to regard the Bonn Powers under the OHR as obsolete, Germany thought the international community would lose credibility if it went forward with the transition to a EU Special Representative without the 5 plus 2 agenda being met.

¶12. (C) On Montenegro's EU application, Schieb reiterated that Germany thought it was important that the Council have a political discussion on the issue of EU enlargement before forwarding the application to the EU Commission for evaluation and comment. "Let's take our time," said Schieb. He thought the Gymnich meeting at the end of March would offer a good opportunity for such a discussion.

BELARUS

¶13. (C) Schieb was receptive to the message that the Eastern Partnership Initiative offered an opportunity to press

Belarus for additional concrete steps on reforms. He also noted that during FM Martynov's recent visit to Berlin, FM Steinmeier had made clear that if Belarus bowed to Russian pressure and recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, this would have "consequences" for Belarus's relationship with the EU. Schieb thought that such a move could obviously affect, for example, whether President Lukashenko were invited to the planned Eastern Partnership Summit meeting in May.

SRI LANKA AND IRAQ

¶14. (C) Schieb said the Council was scheduled to adopt, without discussion, conclusions on Sri Lanka (expressing concern about the growing level of violence and the use of force by the government) and Iraq (welcoming the successful conduct of the January 31 provincial elections).
Koenig